DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 386 108 HE 028 516

AUTHOR Newman, Richard E.; Miller, Michael T.
TITLE Attitudes of High School Personnel Toward NCAA Academic Integrity Reform Measures and Proposals.
PUB DATE [95]
NOTE 16p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Academic Standards; Administrator Attitudes; *Athletic Coaches; College Admission; *College Athletics; Core Curriculum; *Educational Change; Eligibility; Football; Higher Education; High Schools; Integrity; *Intercollegiate Cooperation; *Principals; Teacher Attitudes
IDENTIFIERS Graduation Rates; *National Collegiate Athletic Association

ABSTRACT

This study sought to determine the perceptions held by high school principals and head football coaches in regard to efforts by the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) to improve academic integrity in intercollegiate sports. A total of 112 principals and 79 coaches were asked to rate and rank each of the NCAA's current efforts, including satisfactory academic progress (SAP), core curriculum, initial eligibility index, and disclosure of admission and graduation rates of student athletes. The results indicated that SAP generated the majority of support from principals and coaches as the primary means to improve the status of academic integrity in college athletics. Both groups were found to display an identical sequential order of their mean ranking scores for all four reform measures. (Contains 20 references.) (MDM)

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ED 386 108

Attitudes of High School Personnel Toward NCAA Academic Integrity Reform Measures and Proposals

Dr. Richard E. Newman
Assistant Professor
Department of Physical Education
University of Arkansas-Monticello
Monticello, AK 71656
(501) 460-1496
FAX: (501) 460-1563

Dr. Michael T. Miller*
Assistant Professor and Chair
Higher Education Research Institute
Program in Administration in Higher Education
University of Alabama
206 Wilson Hall
Tuscaloosa, AL 35487
(205) 348-1170
FAX: (205) 348-2161

Running Head: NCAA Reform Measures

*Corresponding author.

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Abstract

The purpose for conducting the study was to determine the perceptions held by high school personnel toward NCAA legislative efforts aimed at improving academic integrity in intercollegiate sports. Utilizing a survey instrument, 191 high school principals and head football coaches were asked to rate and rank each of the NCAA's current major legislative efforts, including satisfactory academic progress, core curriculum, the initial-eligibility index, and a disclosure of the admission and graduation rates of student athletes. Respondents, both coaches and principals, were found to favor criteria associated with satisfactory academic progress.

Introduction

Corruption in college athletics has taken on an increased level of public awareness. Throughout the decade of the 1980's, drug abuse, altered transcripts, false academic credits, illegal recruiting practices, violence, numerous academic irregularities, and a general sense of greed have all been exposed in college athletics (Sage, 1990). These abuses have been especially visible in the high profile sports of men's basketball and football, as evidenced by the report that "fewer than 30% of football and basketball players graduate" (Sanoff, 1990, p. 50), and the case of Memphis State University which graduated 6 of 58 basketball players between 1973 and 1983. The result has been numerous attempts by the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) to foster or facilitate academic integrity.

The process of athletic reform, particularly in regard to the concept of academic integrity in college sports, is reliant on a number of actors, particularly high school officials (Knight Foundation Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics, 1991). The high school principal and athletic coach, specifically, have the ability to influence attention to academics, provide direction to colleges and universities which foster academic and personal growth along with athletic competition, and encourage the pursuit of life-long learning as well as the satisfaction and benefits of education (Coakley, 1990; Knight Foundation Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics, 1991; Snyder, 1972). Additionally, coaches and high school administrators have the potential to

influence student athletes because of their access to the student during very formative years when value and belief systems are being developed (Schwartz, 1990). Success by the NCAA, then, becomes reliant on the ability of high school personnel to enforce or support efforts to reform college athletics.

In light of the coach's and administrator's influence on student athletes, the current study was conducted to determine the attitudes held by high school principals and head football coaches toward NCAA legislative efforts aimed at improving academic integrity in intercollegiate sports.

Background of the Study

Academic integrity in college sports has been a controversial issue since the late-1800's. Due to students' "inability or unwillingness...to control their own athletic programs" (Smith, 1983, p. 372), faculty became involved in regulating athletic activities. Involved faculty produced the first attempt at inter-institutional regulation of athletic programs, but efforts were hindered by differences in the philosophy of the offering and purpose of college athletics. These joint faculty efforts did, however, result in the creation of eligibility standards and the role and mission of college athletics (Smith, 1983).

Academic Integrity Regulation

By the 1920's faculty had demonstrated their inability to regulate intercollegiate athletics. Grade tampering, the idea of

amateurism, and eligibility scandals forced a review of the existing faculty framework for regulating athletics. The result was the landmark report for the Carnegie Corporation by Howard Savage which indicated control should lie with the president of the institution (Thelin & Wiseman, 1989). This concept of presidential control was largely ignored until the American Council on Education reported in the 1950's that presidential control was necessary if college sports were to remain within the realm of higher education's purpose (Hanford, 1979).

The NCAA responded to public and academic criticism of college sports by enacting the "1.600 Rule" in 1965 which required college bound high school athletes to achieve a predicted first-year college grade point average of at least 1.600 (c-minus) before they could receive athletic scholarship assistance (Dealy, 1990). This action was followed by the "2.00 Rule" in 1971 (Dealy, 1990) and "Proposition 48" in 1986 (Cramer, 1986). Proposition 48, deemed a cornerstone in the philosophy and principles of the NCAA, was developed as a single "legislative" measure aimed at "reasonable minimal level of academic qualifications for freshman eligibility" (Toner, 1984, p. 14). Additionally, the measure was supported by the increasing visibility and number of student-athletes who were gaining admission to colleges for the purpose of participation in athletics.

In 1992, the NCAA proposed and adopted a "one-plus-three" model for athletic control which vested primary responsibility

for academic integrity in the college or university president's office (Knight Foundation Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics, 1992). Specifically, the NCAA regulations proposed, and due for implementation, included reporting of admission and graduation rates to high school guidance offices, increasing the number of courses in a core curriculum from 11 to 13, creating an initial-eligibility index based on GPA and ACT/SAT test scores (Proposition 16), establishing guidelines for satisfactory academic progress of NCAA Division I and Division II student athletes.

The Role of High School Personnel

Against this backdrop of institutional regulation and NCAA national efforts, the student athlete remains vulnerable to corruption. Research by Snyder (1972), Hanks (1979), McElroy (1979), and Coakley (1990) has alluded to the role of the athletic coach and high school principal in shaping the values and life-style necessary to combat current corruption in intercollegiate athletics. From these role models, the high school student-athlete learns not only work ethic and the importance of academic performance, but also a sense of values regarding "right" and "wrong."

Ruffin (1982) suggested that principals in particular are key figures in maintaining a harmonious balance between the

academic and athletic performances of student-athletes. Principals also assume an inherent responsibility to guide and counsel student-athletes who are being recruited by colleges and universities, either directly or indirectly through their coaching staffs.

Situated in an ideal setting to address corruption in college sports, the high school coach and principal hold positions of influence second only to the student-athletes family (Snyder & Spreitzer, 1989). Assumed for this investigation, then, was the desire of coaches and principals to have an interest or participate in perpetuating academic integrity in college sports.

Methods

For the purpose of conducting this study, a researcher-developed questionnaire was designed. In the first section of the questionnaire, high school principals and football coaches were asked to rate their level of agreement that each statement related to NCAA current academic reform measures could enhance academic integrity in college sports. These items included five statements related to satisfactory academic progress (SAP), four items pertaining to the initial-eligibility index (IEI), two items on core curriculum (CC), and two items on disclosure of admission and graduation rates (AGR). The second section of the survey requested respondents to rank, in order of what they

believed would be most effective, each of the four academic integrity reform measures.

A random sample of 135 high school principals and 135 football coaches was selected from the 1991-1992 The National Directory of High School Coaches (Dees, 1991) for use in the study. Sample size was determined using Nunnery and Kimbrough's (1971) chi-square formula, and the sample was selected using a table of random numbers. Data were collected during the 1993 academic year.

Results

Using two follow-up mailings to increase the response rate, a total of 191 (71 percent) usable surveys were returned for use in data tabulation. Of the responses, 79 (41 percent) were coaches and 112 (59 percent) were principals.

Using a one-to-five Likert-type scale, in which a "five" indicated strong agreement that the NCAA should implement legislation related to the reform measure, the combined sample had a mean rating of 3.43 for SAP. This rating was followed by efforts aimed at implementing the IEI (3.28), AGR (3.23), and the CC (3.03). As illustrated in Table 1, both coaches and principals rated the SAP highest.

Utilizing the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) statistic, significant differences were found between coaches' and principals' mean ratings on the IEI and AGR academic integrity

reform measures (see Tables 2 and 3), but not between the SAP and CC reform measure ratings.

On the second section of the survey, respondents were asked to rank each of the four academic integrity reform measures, where a numerical value of one represented the measure believed to offer the best chance of improving academic integrity. Mean ranking scores of coaches indicated SAP received the strongest support as a measure, followed, in rank order, by reform proposals for the IEI, CC, and AGR. The same order was identified by principals (see Table 4). Four separate Chi-square tests of independence (i.e., CC, IEI, SAP, and AGR) were used to analyze the rankings of the measures between coaches and principals. None of the analyses revealed a significant difference.

Conclusions

The fundamental integrity of higher education has been threatened by a rapidly expanding assortment of scandals associated with major college athletic programs, especially in the revenue producing sports of college basketball and football (Sperber, 1990). In response to this question of integrity, the NCAA has introduced "the toughest, most far-reaching academic standards in the history of college sports" (Tucker, 1992, p. 4). The need to involve high school personnel, particularly athletic coaches and principals, in the process of restoring academic integrity to college athletics has been well documented, and must

play a role in the NCAA's efforts. The current study was designed to consider the perceptions of high school personnel in the anticipated success or failure of the NCAA's current legislation.

Rating and ranking results demonstrated that satisfactory academic progress (SAP) generated the majority of support from high school principals and head football coaches as the primary means to improve the status of academic integrity in college athletics. Both groups rated, as well as ranked, SAP first in their evaluative protocols of the NCAA's academic integrity reform measures.

Rating and ranking scores assigned to SAP by principals and coaches indicated that colleges and universities should focus less attention on the initial eligibility of student-athletes and direct more concern and available resources toward academic progress in the form of degree progression and graduation. While the guidelines for the SAP measure were adopted at the 1992 NCAA convention and became effective on August 1, 1992, the legislation is still in its "infancy stage," and questionable academic practices are already surfacing regarding the rule. For example, are major courses of study (e.g., university studies, sports management, etc.) being tailored to satisfy the legislation's progressive academic achievement guidelines toward a college degree and graduation?

Secondly, statistical data from the agreement level responses of high school personnel toward the reform statements

which comprised the first section of the survey questionnaire reflected the following attitudes: (a) favored items directed toward standards associated with satisfactory academic progress; (b) displayed support for preserving the existing initial-eligibility index; (c) indicated opposition to altering the current core curriculum; and (d) exhibited average support for a disclosure of the admission and graduation rates of student-athletes. These attitude patterns expressed, through agreement levels, served to reinforce the rating and ranking results identified in the study.

Finally, principals and coaches showed a large amount of similarity when their response patterns were analyzed and their ranking results of reform measures were examined. For example, both groups displayed an identical sequential order of their mean ranking scores of academic integrity reform measures.

As colleges, universities, and the NCAA begin to work toward higher levels of academic integrity, efforts must be taken to incorporate the reactions of high school personnel. Considering the often developmental nature of education, a more holistic approach to fostering harmony between athletics and academics must be sought, and high school personnel must play a larger role in this approach. High school personnel play a fundamental role in the development of athletes, and research such as this must be encouraged and conducted to gain a better understanding of how athletes learn the game of college sports.

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Table 1

Group Mean Rating Scores of Academic Integrity Reform Measures

Reform Measure	Coaches	Principals	Combined
Core Curriculum	2.98	3.07	3.03
Initial-Eligibility Index	3.16	3.40	3.28
Satisfactory Academic Progress	3.30	3.55	3.43
Admission and Graduation Rates	2.91	3.54	3.23

Table 2

Summary Table for SAP Rating ANOVA

Source	SS	df	MS	F
Between	2.82504	1	2.82504	4.12082*
Within	129.57	189	0.685553	
Total	132.395	190		

*$p \geq .05$.

Table 3

Summary Table for AGR Rating ANOVA

Source	SS	df	MS	F
Between	18.3155	1	18.3155	10.7188*
Within	322.949	189	1.70872	
Total	341.264	190		

p≥.001.

Table 4

Group Mean Ranking Scores of Academic Integrity Reform Measures

Reform Measure	Coaches	Principals	Combined
Core Curriculum	2.51	2.33	2.42
Initial-Eligibility Index	2.39	2.32	2.35
Satisfactory Academic Progress	1.96	1.96	1.96
Admission and Graduation Rates	3.12	3.36	3.24